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**Testimony by Ron McLellan, President
Municipal Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 506
Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511
SB 989 and HB 6409
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Public Hearing: March 10, 2011**

My name is Ron McLellan. I am the President of Municipal Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 506 ("MEUI) and Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511 (CEUI), representing approximately 900 municipal employees throughout Connecticut and 4500 state employees in the NP-2 Maintenance and Service Bargaining Unit.

I am testifying today in opposition to Senate Bill 989 and House Bill 6409. These bills would negatively impact the bargaining rights of thousands of municipal workers in the State of Connecticut by diminishing their rights to present relevant financial data to arbitration panels as well as requiring the costly use of American Arbitration Association members as neutral arbitrators.

MEUI represents employees in 25 different town and cities in the State of Connecticut. These employees are hardworking, middle-class paraprofessionals, custodians, road maintainers, and town administrators just to name a few. Every few years, these employees collectively bargain for successor collective bargaining contracts pursuant to the Municipal Employees Relations Act and often times come to settlement without any intervention.



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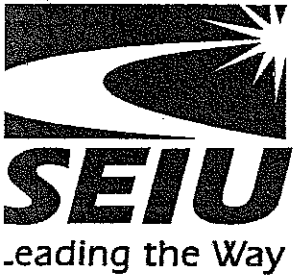
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However, there are times when the Employer and the Employees cannot come to an agreement over the terms of a successor contract and require the use of binding arbitration. Under current law, the selected arbitration panel is directed to give consideration to the financial capability of the municipal employer. However, proposed Senate Bill 989 would modify such consideration to exclude consideration of the municipality's reserve fund balance. Such exclusion significantly impairs the ability of the employee's to present a complete financial proposal to an arbitration panel. This impairment is caused by the tendency of municipalities to hide funds in reserve fund accounts in order to paint a more dire financial situation than truly exists and the inability to pay its employees a fair and decent wage for the work they are performing.

In addition to the debilitating affect of Senate Bill 989 detailed above, House Bill 6409 additionally cripples the binding arbitration process by requiring that neutral municipal arbitrators be members of the American Arbitration Association (AAA). Such proposal seeks to increase the costs of municipal arbitration to a point of discouraging workers from seeking a fair and impartial resolution to their successor collective bargaining agreements. While AAA is a well known and used service in the labor world, AAA arbitrators are typically more expensive, and add no more value than many of the dedicated panel arbitrators currently used for such roles in Connecticut.

LOCAL 506



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Both Senate Bill 989 and House Bill 6409 would significantly diminish the rights of hard working municipal workers, as well discourage municipal employers from engaging in meaningful negotiations with such workers. Therefore, I respectfully oppose such legislation before you today.

Thank you.

Ron McLellan

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